

## THE NIGHTHAWKERS

### Chapter 30

Pauline was clothed in the same black unitard as her family in the Thread Continuum. She could not say when her earthly fabrics vanished, just as she could not say exactly why she ever thought she belonged anywhere but here.

Her blue eyes took on the deep, dark cast of her Thread Continuum family as her consciousness expanded and the world, with all its connected eras, became her forever home. Pauline and Chaitanya breathed as one. Even when apart, they were still together, their consciousness united, their intentions in harmony. They danced together often, their twinned energies igniting a deep exchange of sensual pleasure beyond the power of words to describe, as it far exceeded the boundaries of the five earthly senses.

She could never have imagined such unalloyed joy in her previous life. Love, community, and the gentle but reassuring hum of a chord deep within her were constant reminders that she belonged and would never face abandonment again. Still, there was more to do before her docking would be complete. Emissaries formed a circle of support, with Pauline at the center.

Bex, Helena, and Cheyenne, the friends of her first flowering in the Thread Continuum, radiated silent encouragement. Pauline flicked her wrist and conjured a flashing golden ball. A swarm of objects materialized in the pulsating light, all of them stolen by Tyrone Lake—with an assist from Greyson Henley, born Greyson Lake.

Pauline sought out the rightful heirs of the stolen treasures—the Egyptian earrings, cuneiform tablets, silk purses, onyx bulls, glass beads, and so much else that had been hoarded, hidden, or sold to the highest bidder. Every artifact had its own life—many lives, in fact, as its function changed from day to night, season to season, generation to generation. Those lives deserved honor and respect across the thresholds of time.

Pauline posed the key questions, seeking to learn who secretly yearned to care for the souls of these objects. Whose flagging spirits needed to be restored? Whose purpose would be bolstered by meaningful possession? She sent objects flying through space at speeds that exceeded time itself. The Peruvian toymaker clapped with excitement as he took possession of the Incan funeral mask. A graduate student studying philosophy in India cradled the militiaman's sword in her arms. And the Susquehannock face pot, the first object she and Grey had found together, made its way into the hands of a retired auto mechanic in Scranton, Pennsylvania, whose heart skipped a beat when he discovered the treasure sitting on his kitchen table.

These acts of reparation enabled Pauline to atone for past transgressions and restore a measure of balance among the objects of the world. Justice on behalf of the souls of objects unable to rise to their own defense—that was at the heart of her work, all of their work, in the Thread Continuum.

As for justice on Earth, Pauline knew that Bette French and others who valued restitution would see to that. Another task remained.

Pauline returned to Dean India Nojes's house near the campus of Carthage University, where the dean lay dying in bed. The dean's eyes flickered open when a light breeze swept across her face, heralding Pauline's arrival at her bedside.

“I hoped you would come.” The dean’s weakened voice bore no trace of her booming alto from the lecture hall. “I wasn’t sure.”

“I have something for you.” Pauline held a jewel-encrusted brooch in the palm of her hand. “Touch it.” The dean put a withered hand on the artifact and, as she did so, Pauline enclosed the dean’s hand in hers. “What do you see?”

The dean’s watery eyes lit up with happiness. “Ahh. A noblewoman in Ravenna, the brooch pinned to her royal blue gown, as she parades down a wide boulevard with her consort. The crowds cheer them on.” The dean smiled and sighed. “Thank you, Pauline. Thank you.”

Pauline departed, and the dean closed her eyes one last time. Her docking was complete, now. Chaitanya’s refrain, you are more, had been fully realized. The pain of betrayal and abandonment fell away like a distant memory.

Her family encircled her again, for the final ceremony marking her transition. A new name, to signal her rebirth. Pauline chose Ameya, which meant “boundless.” Ameya, Chaitanya called. Her name, in his voice, bore the warmth of the sun. It suits you.

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